

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SOE-02 AID-05 CEA-01 CIAE-00
COME-00 DODE-00 EB-08 DOE-11 H-01 INR-10 INT-05
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 OMB-01 PM-05 USIA-06 OES-07
SP-02 SS-15 STR-07 TRSE-00 ACDA-12 PA-01 NRC-05
/125 W

-----123619 230703Z /10

R 230140Z FEB 78
FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8165
INFO AMCONSUL LENINGRAD
AMCONSUL MUNICH
AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
AMEMBASSY WARSAW
USMISSION USNATO
USDOE WASHDC
USDOE GERMANTOWN MD

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DOE FOR HILL AND WARNKE

E.O. 11652:N/A
TAGS:UR, ENRG, SWEL
SUBJECT:SERIOUS SOVIET COAL MINE ACCIDENT

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1. THE FEBRUARY 22 PRAVDA INDICATES THAT A MAJOR ACCIDENT
OCCURRED IN THE COAL FIELDS OF THE KARAGANDA BASIN,
REPORTEDLY ON FEBRUARY 20. THE REPORT, IN THE FORM OF
AN EXPRESSION OF SYMPATHY FROM THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE
AND THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS, APPEARED ON THE FRONT PAGE.
ACCORDING TO PRAVDA, METHANE GAS EXPLODED IN THE
"SOKURSKAYA" SHAFT OF THE "KARAGANDAugOL" PRODUCTION
ASSOCIATION RESULTING IN AN UNSPECIFIED NUMBER OF DEATHS.

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2. COMMENT. THIS IS THE FIRST EXPLICIT SOVIET ADMISSION
IN THEIR PRESS OF A MAJOR INDUSTRIAL ACCIDENT IN OUR
MEMORY. (THE SOVIETS DID IN 1977 REPORT TO IAEA, HOWEVER,
AN ACCIDENT AT THEIR VORONEZH NUCLEAR POWER STATION BUT

THERE HAS BEEN NO MENTION OF IT IN THE SOVIET PRESS. SOVIET PAPERS HAVE ALSO CARRIED BRIEF ACCOUNTS OF MAJOR MISHAPS IN WHICH FOREIGNERS WERE INVOLVED, FOR INSTANCE, THE ROSSIYA FIRE AND THE 1977 CRASH OF AN AEROFLOT IL-62 AT HAVANA.)

3. THUS, THE APPEARANCE OF THIS REPORT SUGGESTS THAT A SERIOUS ACCIDENT OCCURRED, PROBABLY WITH HEAVY LOSS OF LIFE, NEWS OF WHICH MIGHT HAVE BEEN DIFFICULT TO SUPPRESS. WE WILL BE MEETING WITH MINISTRY OF COAL INDUSTRY REPS FEBRUARY 24 ON BILATERAL OPERATIONAL MATTERS AND HOPE TO LEARN MORE AT THAT TIME. WE WILL ADVISE.

4. THOUGH IT SEEMS UNLIKELY THAT SOVIET FEBRUARY 14 TURNDOWN WAS RELATED TO THIS ACCIDENT, WE NOTE THAT MFA REJECTED REQUEST FROM EMBASSY OFFICERS SONTAG AND BYRNES TO VISIT KARAGANDA FEBRUARY 18-20. MATLOCK

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Message Attributes

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Disposition Approved on Date:
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